

Transportation

The statewide Transportation Strategy Board has provided funds to begin several immediate projects in our region. We will develop a “Uni-Ticket” for visitors to transfer from train to bus as they move around to our attractions and hotels. Shoreline East will increase the trains on their schedule, and we will improve access to our “Jobs-Dial-a-Ride” bus service to help our citizens get to work.

Environment

This year was the best year for new environmental programs that I have seen. We passed landmark legislation calling for Clean Cars. By the 2008 model year, all new cars and light trucks sold in the state will have to meet the strictest of emission standards. Furthermore, 10% of all new cars sold in Connecticut will be Zero Emission Vehicles, using hydrogen or electricity to power them. We provided for sales tax reductions to the buyers of cars that get over 50 miles per gallon. We passed PA 04-252 requiring the Governor’s Steering Committee on Climate Change to further develop plans to cut emissions from our industries and homes. Finally, we passed legislation to empower Inland Wetlands Commissions as they review applications for development.

Veterans

I co-sponsored new legislation to clarify that National Guard and Reservists who have been activated for at least 90 days are eligible for all our state veterans benefits, including help from the Soldiers, Sailors and Marines Fund, and care at the soon to be

renovated Rocky Hill Veterans Home. Also, tuition benefits at state universities and property tax abatements are available to our vets. I will be holding meetings in several locations in the district to help eligible veterans enroll in these important benefits. Call my office for details.

Senator Cook, Veterans Affairs Commissioner Linda Schwartz and a volunteer from “Help a Vet” presented handmade wheelchair quilts to the veterans at the Rocky Hill Veterans Home



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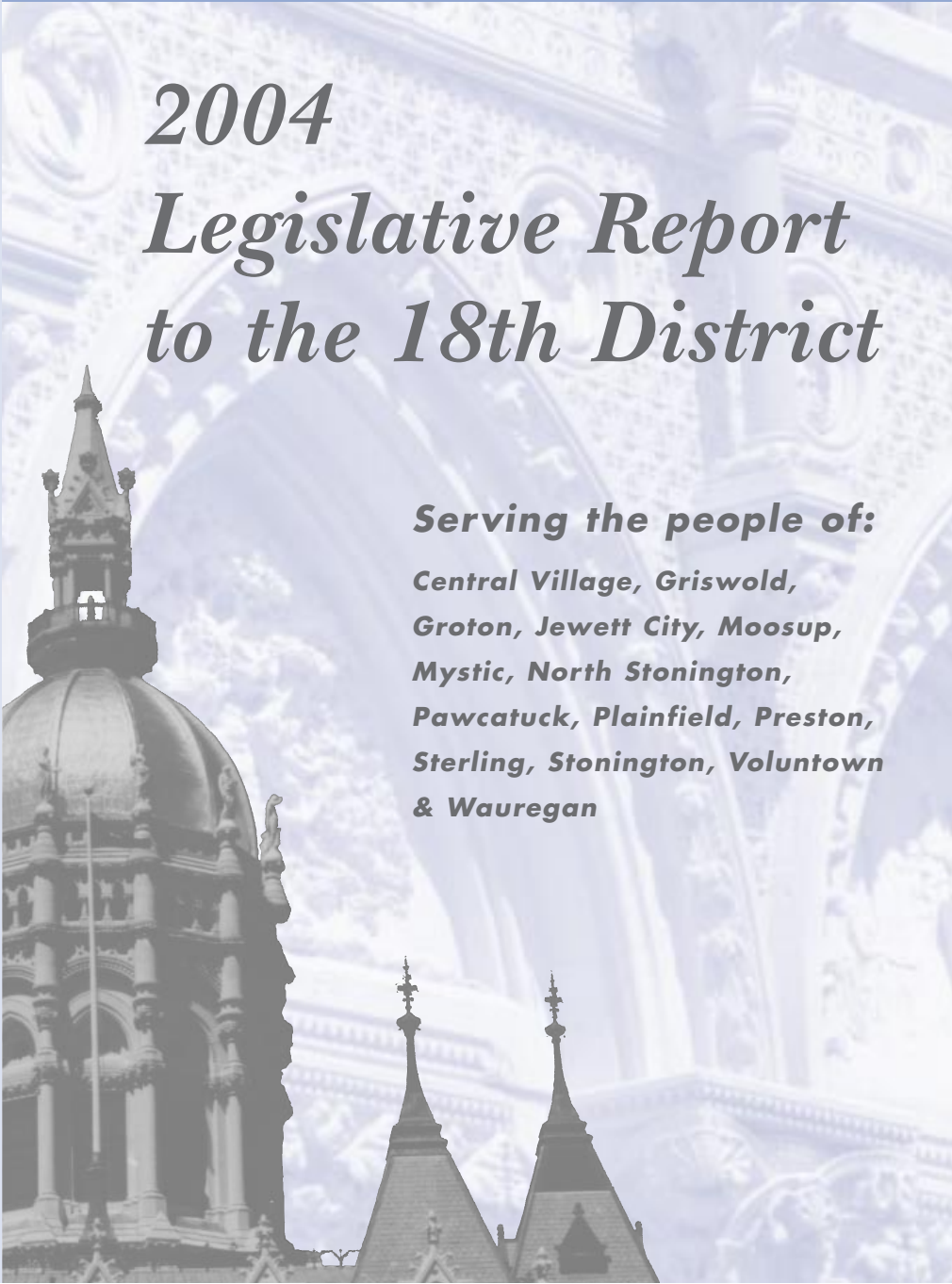
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State Senator

Cathy Cook

2004
Legislative Report
to the 18th District

Serving the people of:
Central Village, Griswold,
Groton, Jewett City, Moosup,
Mystic, North Stonington,
Pawcatuck, Plainfield, Preston,
Sterling, Stonington, Voluntown
& Wauregan



State Senator Cathy Cook

Dear Friend,

At last the heavy cloud of possible impeachment has lifted with the resignation of Governor John Rowland. I know that this is in the best interest of the State and the Rowland family. This ends a tragic chapter in Connecticut politics as Governor Rowland recognized that his personal failings were interfering with his ability to govern.

I am so pleased that my friend and colleague M. Jodi Rell is our new Governor. As you get to know her as I do, you will find that she is gracious and strong. She is well prepared to lead our state into a new era of open, honest and ethical government. I have worked on many issues with Governor Rell, and I look forward to serving as a partner with her on the challenges ahead. She has already told me that changes are coming, and I am eager to help her lead our state in the years ahead.

Here is my legislative report to you on the progress we made in the 2004 General Assembly Session. Please call me if you want more details or other information on any issue of state policy. Have a wonderful summer,

Cathy



Senator Cook participating in Mystic Aquarium's whale interaction program

Tourism

The newly merged state agency called the Connecticut Commission on Tourism and Culture will bring new energy and cooperation for tourism marketing, cultural heritage and art event planning to our region. The recent visit of the cruise ship Maasdam is an example of the new cooperation of communities, tourism experts and business. Look for other exciting collaborations like the Tall Ships visit in July, tours on the Amistad, and new exhibits at Mystic's Aquarium and Seaport, using over \$20 million of state funds to help our state roll out the welcome mat.

ConnPACE / Prescription Drugs

I worked hard this year to preserve our wonderful ConnPACE program that helps seniors and people with disabilities pay for prescriptions. We took advantage of the new federal Medicare prescription drug bill to help us pay for medicines and expand ConnPACE with \$18 million in savings. If you are enrolled in ConnPACE you will not pay more than you do now, and the state will save some money, too. If you have questions, please call my office.



Senator Cook at a recent visit to a nursing home in Plainfield

Department of Mental Retardation

Best of all, I was finally successful this year in obtaining funding to help elderly families find a permanent home in the community for their adult child with mental retardation. Some families have been on the Department of Mental Retardation waiting list for over 10 years. The \$4.6 million will provide homes for nearly 200 people with mental retardation. There also is \$2 million set aside to construct new group homes. In addition, the budget fully funds the needs of the 175 young adults who have completed their special education and are now ready to transition into the working community.

Education

The 8 towns in the 18th District all received an increase in education funds in this year's budget. We established new grants for school readiness



Senator Cook is honored to host an internship program for cadets from the Coast Guard Academy

and after school programs as well. My amendment to increase special education reimbursements did not pass this year, but I will offer it again. We must be certain that our children with special needs receive a fair education while not taking away from any other student's educational program.

Children

As the senior Republican on the Select Committee on Children, I participated in a detailed review of the Department of Children and Families. We set new goals to increase the number of children who are adopted from foster homes. We improved care for children with mental illness and set aside funds to bring children home who are treated in out of state residential care.



Cure Kids Cancer License Plate

I wrote legislation to create the Childhood Cancer Awareness License Plate. This February the new "Cure Kids Cancer" plate made its debut at a touching ceremony at the State Capitol. The first of its kind in the United States, the Cure Kids Cancer plate will support the children's cancer centers in Connecticut at Connecticut Children's Medical Center and Yale New Haven Children's Hospital. As the number one disease killer of children in the United States, we are using an innovative way to raise awareness and funds for childhood cancer without state expense. If you would like more information on this, or any other special program plate, please visit www.dmvct.org or call my office.

Taxes

This year's state budget succeeded in meeting our needs without increasing taxes. Although there were proposals to increase taxes on cigarettes, alcohol, estates and personal income, all were defeated. I am happy to report that my colleagues and I were successful in cutting your property taxes by an additional \$150 when we restored the property tax credit from \$350 to \$500 starting July 1st. I'm still working to cut more unnecessary taxes and control spending. I'm pleased with the move in the right direction, and am proud that we are building a surplus again.

Jobs, Jobs, Jobs

The region was excited when Lowe's Corporation announced their project to build a regional distribution center and bring over 500 permanent jobs to Plainfield. The construction began, but few Connecticut workers were employed at the site. After extensive negotiations over many months, I was thrilled to announce that Lowe's has agreed to amend its contracts and will hire local unionized labor to complete the six miles of interior conveyor belt system. Over 100 members of local construction unions will start at the site this summer bringing local jobs to local workers.